

workshop

Migrant Commons

Narratives of Community, Heritage, and Technology
in the Design of Public Spaces



December 7-8, 2024

Cornell Tech
2 W Loop Rd, New York, NY 10044, US

[project] THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Mapping Immigrants' Preferences and Use of Public Space through Social Media
Toward an Inclusive Design and Management of the Urban Commons.

Cornell Migrations Grand Global Challenge / Mellon Foundation Just Futures Initiative

Overview

The two-day workshop explores how digital technologies can enhance participatory design processes and more effectively engage with underrepresented communities—with a particular focus on immigrants—in creating public spaces. It will feature discussions on overcoming the challenges of capturing and incorporating diverse lived experiences into design. It will also discuss using ICTs, emphasizing AI, to foster meaningful dialogues between practitioners and different publics that can inform a genuinely inclusive approach to designing public spaces.

Background

As cities face increasing pressures from migration flows and climate change, the “sound of silence” project addresses the urgent need for resilient, inclusive public spaces, particularly in immigrant arrival neighborhoods, by using digital tools to gather ongoing, community-led feedback and insights. Grounded in Los Angeles, the project collaborates with local practitioners, institutions, and associations to support decision-making at the intersection of migration integration and climate adaptation, aiming to establish protocols for a community-driven approach to participation that enables immigrants to spatialize their experiences, imaginaries, preferences, and visions in the process of cultural and spatial adaptation.



Objectives

- + Discuss community engagement and meaningful participation to improve public space design.
- + Discuss how digital technologies could bridge designers and different publics in participatory processes.

Themes

DAY 1:

ENGAGED SPECTRUMS: Limitations and Challenges of Participatory Processes In Public Space Design

The design of public spaces has consistently faced difficulties in meaningfully engaging diverse stakeholders, especially underrepresented groups—such as immigrants, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly—. In particular, existing methods struggle to translate participants' needs and lived experiences into tangible design elements, spaces, and environments, often prioritizing programmatic aspects (e.g., features to be incorporated into the space). While programmatic elements are relevant, creating inclusive and welcoming spaces requires a deeper understanding of individuals' inner worlds, including their memories, desires, and emotions. Integrating these insights into the design can expand its programmatic features and provide a broader sense of belonging.

In this session, we will explore the following questions:

- What makes participatory processes meaningful and transparent when designing public spaces for different stakeholders and contexts?
- How do material and political complexities/constraints, including power imbalances and spatial constraints, shape participatory processes?
- When, how, and why should participatory processes be scaled up or down?
- What are the advantages and challenges of using existing technologies versus developing new customized solutions tailored for participatory processes?
- How do technologies support or fail to support participatory processes in different contexts, scales, and timeframes?

DAY 2:

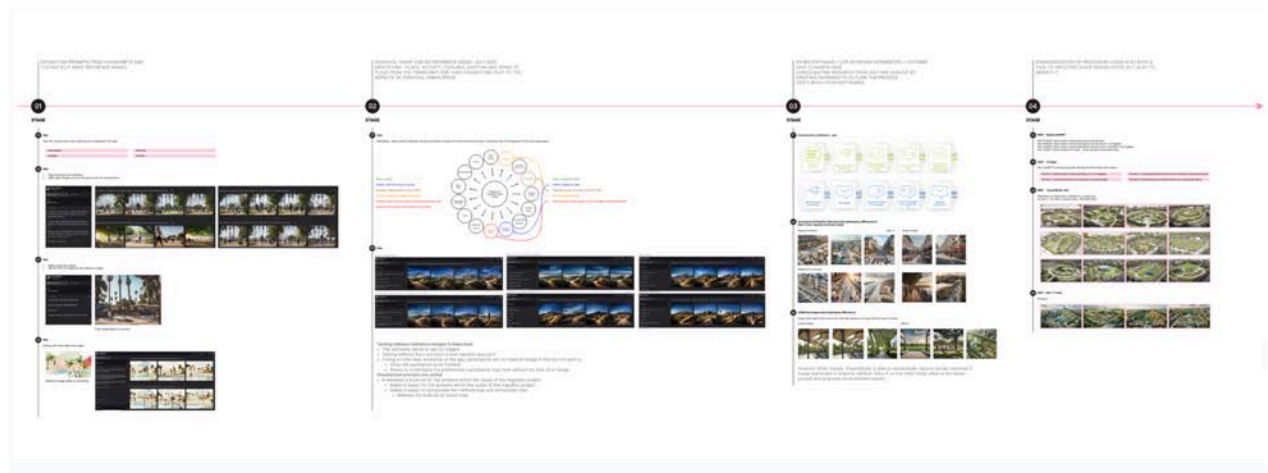
CO-DESIGNING THE COMMONS: Innovative Approaches For the Design of Public Spaces and the Use of Technologies

This session delves into the transformative potential of ICTs as "boundary objects"—tools that bridge the communication and cultural divides between designers and underrepresented communities in creating inclusive public spaces. Embracing technology as a tool and as an active participant in the participatory process, it explores how digital systems can help build common ground, expand the scope of inclusivity, and adapt to evolving urban futures.

The session will tackle the challenges of inclusivity in participatory processes, addressing issues such as representation gaps, internal community dynamics, and the limitations imposed by time and funding. Additionally, it will explore innovative ways to integrate heritage into participatory design, emphasizing immigrant identities and diverse cultural narratives that help shape and renew our understanding of "the commons" in contemporary, pluralistic cities.

In this session, we will explore some of the following questions:

- How can ICTs act as boundary objects to bridge communication and collaboration between designers and underrepresented communities in designing public spaces?
- In considering a more-than-human approach to participation, how do technological systems become active participants in these participatory processes?
- What innovative strategies could overcome representation gaps, community dynamics, internal conflicts, and limitations in time and funding?
- How can we approach heritage today to make the participatory process more inclusive (of immigrant identities)?



Agenda

Day 1 - Saturday, December 7th	
Time	Activities
9:00 - 9:15 am	Reception
9:15 - 9:45 am	Networking + Icebreakers
9:45 am - 10:15 am	Introduction "The Sound of Silence" project
10:15 - 10:30 am	Coffee break
Session 1 10:30 am - 5 pm	ENGAGED SPECTRUMS: Limitations and Challenges of Participatory Processes In Public Space Design
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Presentations (10min) with respondents + discussions
10:30 am - 10:45 am	Martin Rein-Cano Should participation be designed? A case from Copenhagen
10:45 am - 11:00 am	Damiano Cerrone Participatory AI: reshaping cities and their Imaginaries
11:00 am - 11:15 am	Jose Guridi From Fake Perfects to Conversational Imperfects
11:15 am - 11:30 am	Marina Cervera Alonso de Medina Civilscales
11:30 am - 11:45 am	Wendy Ju Robots in the Borough Square
11:45 am - 12:00 pm	Catherine Griffiths Designing counter-algorithms to reimagine activism in the city
12:00 pm - 12:30 pm	PhD Lightning Talks
	Ruixiang (Albert) Han, Daniel Enriquez Communal Mixed Reality: Immersive Community Engagement for Climate Resilience
12:30 pm - 2 pm	Lunch
2 - 2:30 pm	Introduction to the questions and Break out room dynamics
2:30 - 3:45 pm	workshop/Break out rooms
3:45 - 4 pm	coffee break
4 - 5 pm	Wrap up session
6:30 pm	Dinner (optional)
Day 2 - Sunday, December 8th	
Time	Activities
9:00 - 9:15	Reception
Session 2 9:15 - 2:30 pm	CO-DESIGNING THE COMMONS: Innovative Approaches For the Design of Public Spaces and the Use of Technologies

9:15 - 10:45 am	Presentations (10min) with respondents + discussions
9:15 am – 9:30 am	Carl DiSalvo Community Data as Contestation and Care
9:30 am – 9:45 am	Nicolas Grefenstette Multiple Layers of Information Communication Technologies and Their Use in Urban Public Space, in the Context of New York City
9:45 am – 10:00 am	Marco Rangel Toward a 'Park for All' - Reflections on the Participatory Design Framework for Puente Hills Landfill Park
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Tapan Parikh Remaking and Unmaking the City
10:15 am – 10:30 am	Maria Gabriella Trovato Landscape Rights and Justice in Time of Conflicts
10:30 am – 10:45 am	Christopher Kroner Embedded Design Practice: Amplifying Community Champions
10:45 - 11:15 am	PhD Lightning Talks
	Laura Cortes Rico Three insights from my experience with participatory design: acknowledging non-neutrality, provoking dialogues, and embracing plurality Eun-Jeong Kang How Some Forms of Participation May Misrepresent User Needs – A Case Study of a K-Pop Fandom Application Yeonju Jang Lessons from Future LLM Design for Citizen Engagement in Public Policy
11:15 - 11:30 am	Coffee break
11:30 am - 12 pm	Introduction to the questions and Break out room dynamics
12 pm - 1 pm	workshop/Break out rooms
1 pm - 2 pm	Lunch
2 pm -2:30 pm	Closing remarks

Participants

The workshop will bring together experts from different fields, such as Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Information Science, Communications, and Design, among others.

- + **Carl DiSalvo**, 2024-2025 James Wei Visiting Professor at Princeton University and Professor in the College of Computing at the Georgia Institute of Technology

Carl's research explores how design methods foster and thwart democratic participation and how communities use and resist data and algorithms while working toward social change. Throughout his work, he draws together concepts and practices from art and design, and the humanities and social sciences to interpret and make socio-technical systems. He is the author two books, *Adversarial Design* (MIT Press 2012) and *Design as Democratic Inquiry* (MIT Press 2022).

+ **Catherine Griffiths**, Assistant Professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation

Catherine Griffiths is an Assistant Professor in Computational Design Practices at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP). She views algorithms as contemporary sites of struggle, studying their impact on labor operating across different scales, including cities, workplaces, and within the home. She investigates a post-AI human rights landscape that redefines labor relations, gender politics, algorithmic governance, and the rights to the city. She received her Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Media Arts + Practice from the University of Southern California. She holds an M.Arch from The Bartlett, University College London.

+ **Christopher Kroner**, Principal, MASS Design Group, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Columbia University GSAPP

Christopher Kroner believes that design is for all, viewing architecture and urban design as daily acts of outreach. Upon joining MASS Design Group in 2017, he founded the Hudson Valley Design Lab in Poughkeepsie, NY, to show how embedding design expertise in smaller cities can accelerate urban rejuvenation. As a Principal at MASS, he blends engagement practices as an act of community trust building into impactful projects, such as the Champions Walk memorial. An award-winning designer and passionate educator, Christopher teaches urban design at Columbia University, sharing his vision of design as a means for social impact to explore revitalization strategies for small cities across Appalachia.

+ **Damiano Cerrone**, UrbanistAI, SPIN Unit

Urbanist, Researcher, and Educator. He cofounded SPIN Unit, an urban research and innovation practice, and UrbanistAI, a participatory design platform to reimagine the future of our cities. His practice focuses on urban research and policy design with a focus on transformative governance. Cerrone is also affiliated with and teaches at several academic institutions in Finland and abroad.

+ **Marco Rangel**, Landscape and Urban Designer, Studio MLA

Marco is a landscape and urban designer with a regenerative interest in fusing themes of human identity with architectural design and the natural world. In an ever-shifting world, Marco willfully advocates for the criticality in discovering timeless and soulful design drivers for multi-scalar, complex sites that evolve from intuitive conceptualizations into living places of material and psychic value. Marco has been a designer at Studio-MLA in Los Angeles for the last four years and received design training at Parsons School of Design and Cornell University.

+ **Maria Gabriella Trovato**, Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Maria Gabriella Trovato is a licensed Architect and a Landscape Architect with a PhD in Landscape Architecture: Parks, Gardens, and Spatial Planning (UNIRC and the University of Naples, 2003). She is an Associate professor and the Program leader of the International Master Program in Landscape Architecture for Landscape Sustainability at the LANDSAM, Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Her most recent research focuses on Landscape in Emergency at the NMBU Center for Landscape Democracy (CLaD), the Nordic Network for Landscapes and Welfare, HORIZON 2020 on Migration Governance, Women in Scandinavian Landscape Architecture, the EuropeAid project on Landscape Assessment and waste

management, the MEDSCAPES project funded by the ENPI/CBCMED, the Landscape Atlas for Lebanon, and the FLRM (Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism) project funded by the FAO and MOA.

+ Marina Cervera Alonso de Medina, NABLABCN Studio

Marina Cervera is a distinguished architect and landscape architect with expertise in urban landscapes, public spaces, and strategic studies of urban landscapes. She holds a Master's in Landscape Architecture (2003) and Urban Research (2014) from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) - Barcelona Tech. Marina serves as the Executive Director of the Landscape Architecture Department at the College of Architects of Catalonia and as an adjunct professor at UPC-BarcelonaTech. She leads NABLAbcn Studio in Barcelona, specializing in landscape planning and design. Internationally, Marina has made significant contributions to the field, including winning major competitions in Barcelona and providing consultancy to the city council and metropolitan area. She is also a passionate advocate for the profession, actively promoting it through her tenure as IFLA PPP Chair (2016–2020) and her leadership in the Barcelona International Landscape Biennial.

+ Martin Rein-Cano, Founder and principal of Topotek1

Martin was born in Buenos Aires in 1967. He studied Art History at Frankfurt University and Landscape Architecture at the Technical Universities of Hannover and Karlsruhe. He trained in the office of Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz in San Francisco. In 1996 he founded TOPOTEK 1. TOPOTEK 1 partakes in a wide variety of international projects and has achieved the first prize in various competitions. Several professional books and articles have been published exclusively on its work, which has been honoured with many awards and prizes, such as the German Landscape architecture Prize 2015 for the UNESCO World Heritage Site Cloister Lorsch in Germany, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture 2016 for Superkilen in Copenhagen; the Qatar Sustainability Awards 2018 for the Novy Arbat project in Moscow and the Cologne Architecture Prize 2021 for the School Complex Altstadt Nord.

Martin Rein-Cano has been appointed as a guest professor in different academic institutions in Europe and North America, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University and latest the Dessau Institute for Architecture. He frequently lectures at internationally renowned universities and cultural institutions and regularly serves on competition juries.

+ Nicolas Grefenstette, Deputy Director at NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

is a licensed landscape architect and urban planner dedicated to improving New York City's public realm. He currently manages a portfolio of parks, playgrounds and resiliency projects as a Deputy Director of Landscape Architecture at NYC Parks, and is interested in the intersection of technology, operations and urban design. He specializes in the delivery of complex urban public space projects, and parks facilities management. He is a graduate of Cornell University and University College London with degrees in Landscape Architecture, City & Regional Planning, and Geography.

+ Robert (Bob) W. Balder, Gensler Family Sesquicentennial Executive Director of AAP NYC

Robert (Bob) Balder (B.S. URS '89) has held several important positions in New York City, including director of the Mayor's Office of Lower Manhattan Development, and executive vice president of the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Most recently, he was director of planning and urban design at Gensler, New York. As the executive director of AAP NYC, Balder's charge is to help advance and coordinate AAP NYC's

programs, and to ensure that the AAP presence in New York City is optimized for all AAP students, faculty, and alumni.

+ Wendy Ju, Associate Professor, Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute at Cornell Tech

Wendy Ju is an Associate Professor at the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute at Cornell Tech and the Technion. She is a member of the Information Science field at Cornell University. Dr. Ju comes to Cornell Tech from the Center for Design Research at Stanford University, where she was Executive Director of Interaction Design Research, and from the California College of the Arts, where she was an Associate Professor of Interaction Design in the Design MFA program. Her work in the areas of human-robot interaction and automated vehicle interfaces highlights the ways that interactive devices can communicate and engage people without interrupting or intruding. Dr. Ju has innovated numerous methods for early-stage prototyping of automated systems to understand how people will respond to systems before the systems are built. She has a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford, and a Master's in Media Arts and Sciences from MIT. Her monograph on The Design of Implicit Interactions was published in 2015.

+ Tapan Parikh, Associate Professor, Information Science Department, Cornell Tech

Tapan Parikh is an Associate Professor at Cornell Tech and in the Information Science Department at Cornell University. His research includes HCI and the design and evaluation of information technologies for education, governance and international development. Tapan's students have started several tech companies based on his research and teaching. He holds a Sc.B. degree in Molecular Modeling with Honors from Brown University and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Computer Science from the University of Washington, where his dissertation won the William Chan Memorial award. Tapan has received the NSF CAREER award, a Sloan Fellowship and was named TR35 Humanitarian of the Year.

Project Migrations research team

+ PI Maria Goula, Professor Department of Landscape Architecture, CALS, Cornell

Maria Goula is a licensed Architect and Landscape Architect with a Ph.D. in Landscape Design Theory. She has over 20 years of teaching and professional experience in Barcelona, Spain, and is an expert in Mediterranean coastal and semiarid landscapes. Her research focuses on the reinvention of leisure landscapes and resilient coastal design, including the concept of the "second coast," which integrates heritage, memory, and adaptation to change. Maria has lectured at over 25 institutions worldwide, contributed to award-winning landscape cartographies for Catalonia, and serves as a founding member of the European Landscape Biennial committee. She is also on the boards of the Landscape Architecture Europe Foundation and the Journal of Landscape Architecture (JoLA).

+ CoPI Lee Humphreys Professor and Chair Department of Communications, CALS, Cornell

Lee Humphreys is Professor and Chair of the Communication Department at Cornell University. She studies the ways people adopt communication technology, specifically focusing on mobile and social media. Using qualitative field methods, she focuses on how people integrate communication technology into their everyday lives. She is the author of *The Qualified Self: Social media and the accounting of everyday life* (MIT Press,

2018) and the co-editor with Paul Messaris of *Digital media: Transformations in human communication* (Peter Lang, 2006/2017).

+ CoPI Cristobal Cheyre, Assistant Professor in Information Science, Cornell Bowers CIS

Cristobal Cheyre is an assistant professor in the Department of Information Science at the Cornell Bowers College of Computing and Information Science. His research focuses on understanding the economic and societal effects of the technologies that shape our increasingly data-driven society. His ongoing work includes studies on how privacy regulations and industry led initiatives affect online content providers and its users, how economic incentives in online platforms influence participation and the outcomes experienced by participants, and how online platforms can be leveraged to reduce racial discrimination and increase the representation of underrepresented groups in participatory processes.

+ CoPI Duarte Santo, Architect, Landscape and Urban Designer

Duarte Santo is an Architect, Landscape and Urban Designer, Educator, and Researcher with expertise spanning art, architecture, landscape, and tourism. His work focuses on sensory ecologies, material flows, and island landscapes. A qualified architect with degrees from Porto, London, and ETSAB/UPC Barcelona, Duarte has over 20 years of experience in award-winning practices like OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Allies and Morrison, contributing to high-profile projects such as Casa da Música, Lisbon Aquarium, and the Design Museum, London. He has curated and led interdisciplinary projects, including the TRACE exhibition for the London Festival of Architecture and the sensorial video "on the im/permanence of the (is)land," displayed at the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale. At Cornell University, Duarte teaches seminars on material flows, equity in landscapes, and sensory ecologies, integrating global issues into innovative design practices.

+ Jose Guridi, Doctoral Researcher Cornell Bowers Computer and Information Sciences

Jose is a Ph.D. student in Information Science at Cornell University and co-founder of the consultancy firm Foresight in Chile. His main interests are in the intersection of technology policy and HCI. In particular, his research focuses on the political processes related to how technology policy is connected with how new technological applications can influence those processes. Before his PhD, he worked in the Ministries of Economy, Development, and Tourism and in the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge, and Innovation in Chile, where he led the Future and Social Technology Adoption Unit (FAST) and created the National AI Policy of Chile.

Doctoral Researchers/PhD Students

+ Daniel Enriquez, Computer Science, Cornell Tech

Daniel is a Ph.D. student in Computer Science at Cornell University, advised by Prof. Wendy Ju. His current research interests are in collaboration in Virtual and Augmented Reality. Before joining Cornell University, he was a Master's Student at Virginia Tech (formerly advised by Prof. Yalong Yang, co-advised by Prof. Chris North).

+ Eun-Jeong Kang, Information Science Cornell

Eun-Jeong Kang is a Ph.D. student at Cornell University who is interested in investigating the influence of AI on community dynamics and the ways in which authenticity can be established in AI-mediated communication. She possesses a diverse background encompassing marketing, creator economy, and fan studies.

+ Laura Cortes Rico, Information Science Cornell

Laura Cortes Rico is an electrical engineer and PhD student in Information Science at Cornell University since 2023, whose research interests are in the critical design, production, and use of digital technologies through the lenses of environmental and social justice. She has mainly worked with (e-)textile technologies, and currently, she is getting involved with machine listening systems.

+ Ruixiang (Albert) Han, Information Science, Cornell Tech

Ruixiang (Albert) Han is a researcher and PhD student at FAR Lab at Cornell University, advised by Prof. Wendy Ju. He obtained a B.A. in Computer Science from New York University, with a focus on Interactive Media Arts. Albert's interdisciplinary background in design and technology kindled his passion for exploring new methods in Human-Computer Interaction.

+ Yeonju Jang, Information Science Cornell

Yeonju Jang is a PhD student in Information Science at Cornell University since 2022. With a background in Human-Computer Interaction and Text Data Analysis, her research focuses on public participation, language power dynamics, and AI design. She is currently exploring how AI can shape and mitigate power dynamics embedded in expert language in policy-making processes when public voices are incorporated.

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