

a feminist reclamation project. Jungnickel wants to render the inventors and their stories visible, arguing that “Learning about past lives invites us to reflect on our own” (p. 9). Because what women wear while cycling, still matters.

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Christopher M. Kelty

The Participant – A Century of Participation in Four Stories, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2020, pp. 344

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Christopher Kelty is an anthropologist and historian who has dedicated the last couple of decades of his scholarly work to study, discuss, and understand participation. *The Participant* stands apart from his previous works as it shifts the focus away from grassroots or domain specific forms of participation with their localized practices, cultures, politics, and infrastructures. Indeed, the book encompasses a far-reaching aim. Its starting point is that participation has increasingly become associated to decision-making and political processes. The aim of the book is to investigate the genealogy of participation pertaining to the last century of US and EU societies, and therefore to identify both the particularities and “the singularity of participation, not just its variations.” (p. 6). The book goes beyond the usual questions about “participation in what?” or “why do we participate?” and it focuses on the thought-provoking one about whether it is possible to participate in participation. As such, the contribution of the book is ambitious and, admittedly, unique in its scope, finding its place along those few that try to question participation in fields such as, for instance, media and cultural studies (Barney et al. 2016) and participatory

design (Andersen et al. 2015).

The Participant is ambitious also for its unconventional and, in some ways, performative nature. Kelty admits a “mischievous pleasure in an absurd experiment” (p. 6): to write an ethnography of participation based on experiences of participation, which he did not have. As a matter of fact, “the participant” is not that much of a real object (or subject) of study for the book, but rather a fictional character, yet realistic and plausible. The vignettes of “the participant” open and close each of the central chapters and they allow Kelty to bring into focus four assemblages of participation. These are understood in the book as “practical, material arrangements of people and things” (p. 37) and they characterize a specific way of *formatting participation* – a central concept in *The Participant*. Each assemblage supports a specific inquiry angle of the three constitutive elements of participation: *contributory autonomy*, *the experience of participation*, and *forms of life*. In each chapter, such analysis is done through the thorough and meticulous inspection of the historical artefacts and documents of participation, as well as through the meta-analysis of how scholars, practitioners, and institutions interpreted and talked about participation.

Contributory autonomy highlights the form of personhood that stands at the basis of participation. Under late liberalism this form of personhood has become increasingly individualized, and participation is currently understood first and foremost as an individual contribution, which is governed by procedural rationality, to a collective. With the experience of participation Kelty brings back at the center of the discourse the affective, emotional, and subjective dimensions of participation. The experience of participation, he argues, corresponds to the “soft part of the social fossil” (of participation) (p. 78). This is the part that has been increasingly lost in our contemporary understanding of participation, because of its elusive, ephemeral, and difficult-to-grasp nature, and because it has been continuously neglected in our understanding and framing of the phenomenon. Finally, by building directly on Wittgenstein’s concept of forms of life, Kelty points to the importance of the “rules of the game” or, as he defines it, *the grammar of participation*. When equally and commonly understood and judged, such grammar of participation allows for a full experience of participation. Individual and collective become one. However, when the grammar is not understood or valued in the same way by all parties at play, suspicions, perplexity, and puzzlement characterize the experience of participation.

Chapter 1 (*Participation, Experienced*) focuses on the work of Lèvy-Bruhl and on an older meaning of participation that paved the way to today’s understanding of participation as political concept. Indeed, is Lèvy-Bruhl understanding of *participation mystique* that explicitly connected participation with ethical personhood. Central to Lèvy-Bruhl’s work was the emotional and affective dimension of direct, unmediated encounters

with unknown (primitive, in his vocabulary) forms of life. With the mystical nature of participation, Lèvy-Bruhl highlights the fact that perplexity, the symptom of experiencing participation in this case, foreruns any rationalization of that experience. Chapter 2 (*Participation, Employed*) focuses on the early experiments of social psychologists in work setting to promote an early form of participatory management. In particular, the chapter reflects on the influence that Kurt Lewin's scholarship had on the implementations of such experiments and starts by analyzing Harwood Pajama factory pioneering work in this area. The chapter uncovers the stark difference between the early experiences of workers' involvement in decision making as a group and the subsequent formalization of such involvement into a routinized, individualized process of workers' motivation and satisfaction management. The former was oriented to improve working conditions and workers routines, while the latter to spur productivity or to overcome resistance to change. Chapter 3 (*Participation, Administered*) looks at participation in the domain of public administration. It reflects on the events surrounding the transformations of the Model City program of Philadelphia and how these were tightly connected to the engagement of a black neighborhood. At the center of this chapter is also the concept of expertise, which entered the discourse about citizen participation as a way of circumscribing the scope and power of citizens involvement by means of intermediation and the transformation of participation into a form of consultation. In chapter 4 (*Participation, Developed*), the enthusiasm for and the expectations over the Community Development project – evolved later into the Popular Participation Programme (PPP) – of the United Nations and the World Bank come at the center of the analysis. The chapter shows how Paulo Freire's scholarship of the *pedagogy of oppressed* has been appropriated into the foundations and the many interpretations of Participatory Action Research and, more importantly, embedded into the design and use of "participatory tool kits", which for over two decades became the magic box of wonders of the professionals in and outside of the PPP. *Participation, Concluded* is the fifth and last chapter. Here Kelty tries to suggest possible ways to format participation to move past merely cooptative frames that maximize individualized forms of contribution. These suggestions come in form of statement of principles (e.g. "creating the possibility of disagreement, not the guarantee of consensus") which take stock of the lessons examined in the previous chapters and are read in contrast to the technologically and digitally mediated forms of participation of the twenty-first century.

One regret I have about the book concerns this last chapter and the lack of a reflexive gaze on the suggestions made here. They remain in the form of general principles that (should) apply to assemblages of participation of twenty-first century media and technology. However, an explicit argument, even speculative or provocative, is lacking about how these suggestions could be materialized to support a re-enchanted and full form of

participation rather than, e.g. a more coopted one. In my opinion, there is a missing story that is the one of a last participant or the participant of the future: one who could have enlivened the visible, diarchic, inert, and rife with disagreements form of participation, which Kelty suggests.

I believe that *The Participant* is of great interest to an STS audience whether already familiar and engaged with the theme of participation or not. First, Kelty assumes insights from STS scholars to support the epistemological and methodological foundations of his work: Donna Haraway's emphasis on stories that animate the world; Bruno Latour's credo in prioritizing method over domain; and, in particular, Noortje Marres and Javier Lezaun's works on the material and public dimensions of participation (Marres 2012; Lezaun et al. 2016). Their influence shows through the key arguments, the organization of the book material, and the characterization of the four assemblages of participation. Second, Kelty is skillful in avoiding remaining stuck in a one-dimensional and static understanding of agency when analyzing such assemblages. Through these assemblages, participation is shown to be triggered, supported, mediated, and performed equally by humans and non-humans and it is meticulously discussed by trying to account for all these facets. For instance, particularly effective are the considerations on Queen Victoria's portrait and the Participatory Development Tool kit, which are at the bases of the first and fourth chapters, respectively. The distinction between when and how these artefacts participate versus when and how they mediate participation is clear and convincing. Third, at the center of chapter three it stands a relevant consideration on the role that STS as a field has played in advancing our contemporary understanding of expertise as being always, and at the same time, deeply political and technical. While taking only a few pages of that chapter, the argument for STS is profound, because it provides STS scholars with a mirror for looking at how the field participated in the story of participation. I argue that for any scholar engaged in the "third-wave", or the "participatory turn", of STS (Lengwiler 2008) *The Participant* would prove incredibly inspiring.

To conclude, of *The Participant* I greatly appreciated the richness and thoroughness of arguments. Never shallow or hasty, neither when addressing the minute details of a participatory experience – e.g. the first chapter basically revolves around the unpacking of a footnote belonging to one of Lèvy-Bruhl's works – nor when talking more broadly about how the experience of participation crosscuts the four assemblages. Moreover, what I found particularly convincing in Kelty's work is the analytical frame of the three constitutive elements of participation. As the author rightly puts it, many engage with participation nowadays either to study, implement, or perform it, but we rarely find an explicit explanation of what participation is meant or thought to be at its core. In my opinion, Kelty has shown convincingly throughout the book that the contributory autonomy, the experience of participation, and the forms of life can scaffold a rich and not

taken for granted understanding of participation.

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Paolo Landri

Digital Governance of Education: Technology, Standards and Europeanization of Education, London, Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 192

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Since the upsurge of remote schooling due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, research about the digitalization and the digital governance of education systems has gained significant importance. In this context, Paolo Landri’s monography *Digital Governance of Education – Technology, Standards and Europeanization of Education* appears both as a valuable guide and as a precursor for methodological concerns that researchers increasingly have to respond to. This is especially the case if one shares Landri’s intent to not produce a static rendering of education policy and practice as “matters of fact”, but rather to retrace the shifting power relations and risks regarding digital governance. What makes this book unique is that it provides a sophisticated account of the state of affairs regarding the digital governance and digitalization within the European and Italian educational landscape shortly before the acceleration towards digital schooling we are witnessing during the ongoing pandemic. The research